CLAIMS

1. A safety scalpel blade assembly adapted for attachment to a handle of the type which has a blade carrier in the form of a finger, the assembly comprising a scalpel blade which can be of conventional manufacture, the scalpel blade having a slot to allow the blade to be attached to the blade carrier on the handle, and a guard which extends at least about the cutting edge of the blade, the guard having attachment means to lock the blade to the guard as the assembly is being attached to the handle and which releases the blade from the guard when the blade is attached to the blade carrier on the handle, and a removable tab on the guard having a portion which can be gripped by a person .

2. The assembly as claimed in claim 1, wherein the removable tab has a head portion and a tail portion, the head portion extending forwardly of the blade assembly, and the tail portion extending at least partially into a slot which is present in the guard.

3. The assembly as claimed in claim 2, wherein the removable tab is attached to the guard via at least one breakable portion.

4. The assembly as claimed in claim 3, wherein the breakable portion comprises a first breakable portion (a first neck) and a second breakable portion (a second neck).

5. The assembly as claimed in claim 4, wherein the first breakable portion is closer to the head portion of the removable tab and breaks more easily than the second breakable portion.

6. The assembly as claimed in claim 1, comprising anti-lift means to reduce the ability of the blade guard from lifting relative to the handle.

7. The assembly as claimed in claim 6, wherein the anti-lift means comprises an engagement means on the handle which engages the guard.

8. The assembly as claimed in claim 7, wherein the engagement means comprises an elongated rib or rail in the handle, and a corresponding groove or slot in the guard (or vice versa) such that the guard can slide between the forward and the retracted position but is held against being lifted by the engagement of the rib or rail in the groove or slot.

9. The assembly as claimed in claim 1 comprising a safety catch to prevent excessive retraction of the guard, the safety catch being positioned on a forward part of the guard and comprising a projection.

10. The assembly as claimed in claim 1 comprising a location means to positively locate the guard in the extended position and the retracted position.

11. The assembly as claimed in claim 10, wherein the location means comprises at least one projection which releasably engages in at least one recess when the guard is in the extended position and the retracted position.

12. A safety scalpel assembly comprising a scalpel blade attached to a handle of the type which has a blade carrier in the form of a finger, the assembly comprising a scalpel blade having a slot to allow the blade to be attached to the blade carrier on the handle, and a guard which extends at least about the cutting edge of the blade, the guard having attachment means to lock the blade to the guard as the assembly is being attached to the handle and which releases the blade from the guard when the blade is attached to the blade carrier on the handle, and anti-lift means to reduce the blade guard from lifting relative to the handle.

13. A safety scalpel assembly comprising a scalpel blade attached to a handle of the type which has a blade carrier in the form of a finger, the assembly comprising a scalpel blade which can be of conventional manufacture, the scalpel blade having a slot to allow the blade to be attached to the blade carrier on the handle, and a guard which extends at least about the cutting edge of the blade, the guard having attachment means to lock the blade to the guard as the assembly is being

attached to the handle and which releases the blade from the guard when the blade is attached to the blade carrier on the handle, and a safety catch to prevent excessive retraction of the guard, the safety catch being positioned on a forward part of the guard and comprising a projection.

14. A safety scalpel assembly comprising a scalpel blade attached to a handle of the type which has a blade carrier in the form of a finger, the assembly comprising a scalpel blade which can be of conventional manufacture, the scalpel blade having a slot to allow the blade to be attached to the blade carrier on the handle, and a guard which extends at least about the cutting edge of the blade, the guard having attachment means to lock the blade to the guard as the assembly is being attached to the handle and which releases the blade from the guard when the blade is attached to the blade carrier on the handle, and a location means to positively locate the guard in the extended position and the retracted position.